

**SCHOOL DISTRICT OF SOUTH ORANGE AND MAPLEWOOD NEW JERSEY
PUBLIC BOARD MEETING
June 22, 2020**

RESOLUTION 4027

FOR ACTION

SUBJECT: SOMSD Intentional Integration Initiative

WHEREAS, the School District of South Orange and Maplewood's (SOMSD) Board of Education, has recognized that the demographics of the elementary schools in our school district do not consistently reflect the overall demographics of our community.

WHEREAS, the South Orange Maplewood School District (SOMSD) Board of Education, acknowledges the preponderance of scholarly research that supports the assertion that students who attend schools that are both racially and social economically integrated benefit in many ways (Century Foundation, 2019) including:

- Reduction of anxiety...
- Less likelihood to have racial biases;
- Enhanced leadership skills;
- Reduction of achievement gaps;
- Increased standardized test outcome averages;
- Increased likelihood to enroll in college;
- Decreased likelihood to drop out of school;
- and,
- Improved intellectual self-confidence (stamina).

WHEREAS, the School District of South Orange and Maplewood's (SOMSD) Board of Education, has directed the Administration to research best practices in the area of

school integration and to lead the community through this important discussion with opportunities to offer feedback.

WHEREAS, the School District of South Orange and Maplewood's (SOMSD) Board of Education, acknowledges that the Administration has had multiple public presentations on this important topic including an Intentional Integration Webinar which yielded more than 3000 individual views.

WHEREAS, the School District of South Orange and Maplewood's (SOMSD) Board of Education, believes in the spirit of its moniker, '*a district that celebrates diversity*', and also reiterates the following beliefs that have been shared consistency throughout this process-

1. We believe that educating our children in schools that accurately reflect their communities will best prepare them for success as adults...
2. We believe that our students will benefit both academically and social-emotionally by being educated in diverse schools that closely mirror the demographics of their communities...
3. We believe that no singular school community (nor ethnicity) should bear the majority of the burden of this transition...
4. We believe that 'together,' we can create an intentional strategic plan of action, that can seamlessly complete this transition for our community in a thoughtful and effective way.

WHEREAS, the School District of South Orange and Maplewood's (SOMSD) Board of Education, condemns racism, prejudice, bigotry, intolerance and inequities both in our educational practices and the world as a whole.

WHEREAS, the School District of South Orange and Maplewood's (SOMSD) Board of Education, acknowledges and understands that change in school design and methodology can cause anxiety and angst for students, families and staff members.

WHEREAS, the School District of South Orange and Maplewood's (SOMSD) Board of Education, acknowledges the overwhelming community support received by the public during this process, which is in alignment to the recently shared research from Harvard University (Torres and Weissbourd, 2020).

WHEREAS, the School District of South Orange and Maplewood's (SOMSD) Board of Education, has a strong commitment to address the needs and concerns of our families and also acknowledges the major areas of concern expressed by our community regarding our Intentional Integration Initiative which include:

- Ensuring that students with Special Services are included in a meaningful and thoughtful manner that complies with best practices in educational pedagogy;
- Taking into consideration the need for a systemic pacing of our integration that ensures its success and reduces the potential mental health impact on students; and,
- Understanding the impact and need for consistency in the district's before and after school childcare services.

WHEREAS, the School District of South Orange and Maplewood's (SOMSD) Board of Education, as previously stated in its joint letter with the Superintendent of Schools, recognizes the timeliness of this generational action as our country continues to struggle with the scourge of racism and intolerance.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the School District of South Orange and Maplewood's (SOMSD) Board of Education, hereby approves the Superintendent of Schools' recommendation and directs the Administration to move forward with the launching and applicable investment in the Intentional Integration Initiative (III) as described below (and in our April 2020 District/Community-wide Webinar):

1. A *pacing of implementation*, beginning with the rising kindergarteners of September 2021 (yr. 1). We believe this decision both controls for construction unknowns and de-escalates what we know is currently the #1 parental concern. This will allow us to also do this work very well (registration/assignment etc.) with what could be considered a pilot approach. Next we would apply our algorithm to rising 6th graders and kindergarteners for September of 2022 (yr. 2).
2. The *Berkeley Algorithm** approach, inclusive of census data (parental education, parental income and student's race) has the highest potential for success for our district.
 - a. *Also implementing best practice special services' instructional designs that meet the needs of our students with IEPs and 504s.
 - b. We believe that our algorithm should also have a variable that weighs-*proximity to schools and sibling preference*, as this will assist in minimizing the escalation of transportation cost.